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Marine Biology Faculty from RWU among 2015 STAC Grant Awardees

Roxanna Smolowitz, Dale Leavitt and David Taylor will work on multi-disciplinary teams taking on research challenges related to climate variability and the state's marine environment.



RWU marine biology faculty member David Taylor, who researches mercury levels in local aquatic species (among other projects), was among the Rhode Island STAC grant recipients for 2015. Image Credit: David Silverman

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Bristol, R.I. -- On Feb. 19, the Rhode Island Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) announced the 2015 Rhode Island Research Alliance Collaborative Research Grants, in which \$814,042 was awarded to six multi-disciplinary teams to fund new marine biology research projects. Roger Williams University faculty members Roxanna Smolowitz, Dale Leavitt and David Taylor were among the awardees and will collaborate on two of the six funded projects.

Roxanna Smolowitz, a visiting assistant professor of biology who specializes in aquatic veterinary science, will work with a team of scientists to understand the relationship between physical and chemical changes in the ocean and various health issues affecting coastal fish and shellfish of commercial interest.

Smolowitz's team will include Kathleen Castro and Marta Gomez-Chiarri from the University of Rhode Island and Lewis Rothstein from URI's Graduate School of Oceanography. The grant totaled \$139,952.

Dale Leavitt and David Taylor, both associate professors of biology, will help determine specific data sets in Rhode Island's coastal waters to test a new 3D computer modeling tool that will further extend the ability to understand coastal turbulence. Researchers from Brown University and the University of Rhode Island created the 3D modeling tool as a way to assess the effects of climate change on coastal waters and aid in infrastructure planning, tracking of toxic spills and fisheries management.

The lead investigator's for this project include Baylor Fox-Kemper from Brown University, as well as Lewis Rothstein, Christopher Kincaid, David Ullman and Edward Durbin from the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography. The grant amount is \$160,449.

By funding these research projects, R.I. Gov. Gina Raimondo says she hopes to make Rhode Island an international leader in understanding and predicting the response of marine organisms and marine ecosystems to climate variability. The awards were announced on Feb. 19 at an event at URI's Narragansett Bay campus.